

Texting as a Health Promotion Method

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Introduction

The *Live Healthy Live Well (LHLW)* Team is a group of Family Consumer Science professionals at Ohio State University Extension who offer two email challenges yearly. Each six week email wellness challenge includes:

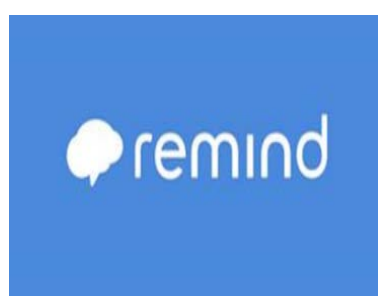
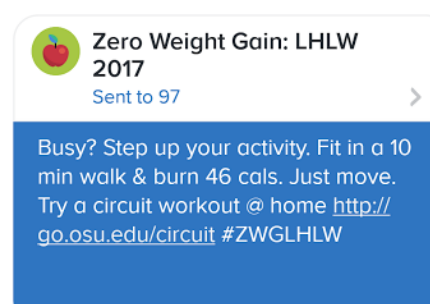
- two weekly email messages
- pre and post surveys
- challenges and successes of participants

In the spring of 2017, a texting pilot was offered to participants in four counties in Ohio. This resulted in 12% participation from the pilot counties. An optional “Zero Weight Gain Challenge” texting program had 98 participants in late Fall 2017. The messages (email and text) were written and reviewed by LHLW team members.

The **Remind app** is used as the platform to disseminate text communications during the *LHLW* challenge. This app is free and offers:

- Real time messaging
- Messages can be scheduled ahead of time
- Messages can include images and links
- Smartphones are not necessary, any phone that can receive a text will work. Or they can be sent to an email account.

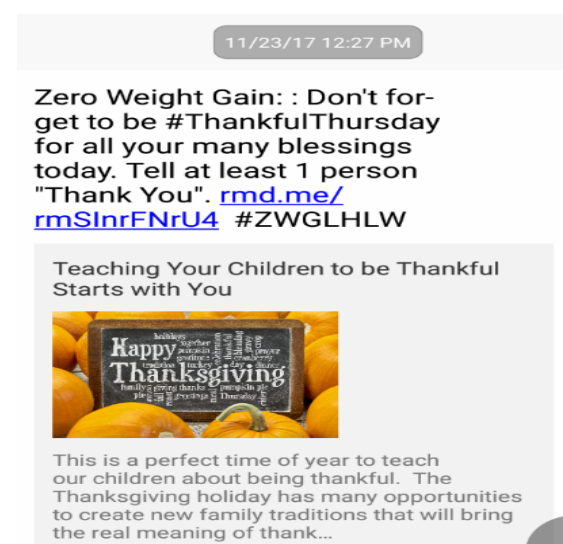
Challenge participants receive two text messages each week of the challenge, texts are delivered on days opposite the email messages. The texts include brief reminders, motivations and links for participants.



Research

Texting

- Texting is the most accessible and used form of communication
- 98% of text messages are opened
- Short-term behavioral change is achieved with text messages
- Effectiveness has been shown in disease prevention and interventions
- Effectiveness exists among adolescents and adults, among minority and nonminority populations, and across nationalities.
- Effective in increasing motivation to exercise, step count and activity levels



Texting Techniques

- Begin messages with fact or question
- Best to send only 1-2 texts a week and at an appropriate time (not during rush hours or on Mondays)
- Best to link with desired outcomes
- Frame messages in a positive tone
- Frame messages reminding of potential negative outcomes
- Keep messages at 8th grade reading level or below
- 140 to 160 characters, depending on the service you use
- Avoid Textisms – like “U” for “You”

Results

Survey Results from Post Program Participants in the Texting Program ~ compiled from participants in the optional Spring and the Zero Weight Gain Programs.

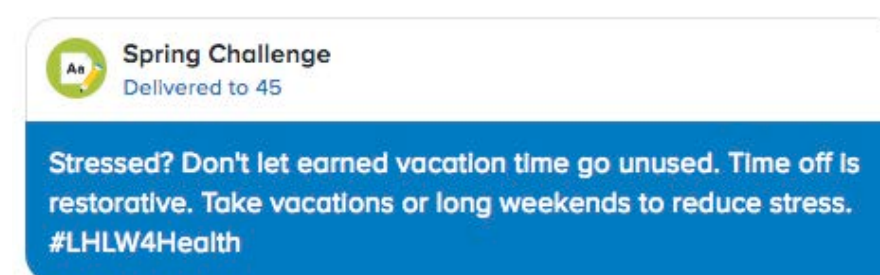
90% reported that they “Benefited from Participating” in the optional texting program.

Only 2% of respondents reported they wouldn’t participate in the texting program in the future.

Comments included:

“The information is always very helpful. I liked the addition of the text messages.”

“Getting emails and text messages was a huge motivating factor, because I knew I had to report back.”



Due to positive response the LHLW Team will be offering a new texting program ~ LHLW 365!

Want to sign up for LHLW 365?

Text @lhlw365 to 81010

You will receive once a week wellness text messages beginning in February.

Resources

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Prestwich, A., Perugini, M., and Hurling, R. (2009). Can the effects of implementation intentions on exercise be enhanced using text messages? *Psychology and Health* 24 (6) 677-697.

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